

NORTH CHICAGO, IL – At a ceremony held at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Congressman Kirk joined Vice Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Patrick Walsh to commission “Battle Stations 21,” the Navy’s new life-sized, ship-in-a-bottle and state-of-the-art training simulator.

Inside a new \$82 million facility floats the USS Trayer, a 210-foot-long guided-missile destroyer at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Before graduating and reporting to the fleet, 352 recruits fight fires and floods to simulate saving their ship each night – all part of 17 scenarios unfolding during an intense 12-hour period inside a 157,000 square-foot facility.

“In 2001, I worked with Navy Secretary Gordon England to accelerate federal funding for this project to provide Navy sailors with the most realistic training possible,” Congressman Kirk said. “Drawing on the combat experience of Master Chief James Parlier, a survivor of the 2000 terrorist attack against the USS Cole, we funded the creation of a state-of-the-art training facility that is the best in the U.S. military. Marine Corps Crucible, stand aside – Battle Stations 21 now represents the toughest training offered to the men and women wearing America’s uniform.”

“Master Chief Parlier’s experiences during the attack on the USS Cole helped shape how Battle Stations prepares new sailors to overcome the most extreme combat challenges. From treating the wounded to battling fires and flooding, recruits have never before received such thorough training. It’s as real as it gets -- Battle Stations 21 will save the lives of young Americans at sea.”

Master Chief Parlier served as the USS Cole’s top enlisted officer at the time of the attack. As a medical corpsman for 21 years, he played a key role in saving the ship and its crew. He went on to serve as the Command Master Chief of Great Lakes during the construction of Battle Stations 21.

Six special effects firms collaborated in the construction of USS Trayer – designed to be the unluckiest ship in the Navy. Through set design, flames, sound, props, lighting and a variety of special effects -- including piped-in aromas and smoke -- recruits will experience the sights and sounds of ship at sea. Thousands of gallons of water will flood compartments while flames jet from fire-fighting areas. Floors will also shake to mimic the ship’s movement, as well as reverberations from a simulated enemy attack.

Battle Stations 21 is part of a \$1 billion redevelopment of Great Lakes – the Navy’s only training

center for recruits reporting to the surface fleet. The Battle Stations 21 facility is the capstone of the billion dollar recapitalization of Great Lakes. The project follows this year’s announced creation of the Navy’s first joint Navy/VA hospital and the opening of a new gate to spur economic development in the base’s home community of North Chicago.

“I am grateful that the Navy fast-tracked my request to build Battle Stations 21,” Congressman Kirk said. “I think that every admiral in the navies of our allies will request a visit to see the best naval training simulator in the world.”

Members of the media interested in touring the new facility should contact Eric Elk at 847-940-0202.